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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TEGUCIGALPA 001992

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR WHA DAS FISK AND WHA/CEN
STATE FOR PRM, INL/LP, DRL/PHD, G/TIP, CA/P, AND DS
DHS FOR SBI (SHIFFMAN) AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (ARCOS)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL SMIG ASEC PGOV KCRM HO

SUBJECT: HONDURAN MINISTERS DEMARCHED ON DEPORTATION PLAN;
GOH SUPPORTIVE OF U.S. REQUESTS AND SEEKS DHS ASSISTANCE

REF: A. STATE 176485

1B. ZIFF/WILLIARD/OLSEN E-MAILS 9/19-26/05
1C. FISK/SHIFFMAN E-MAIL 09/07/05
1D. FISK/WILLIARD/OLSEN/MCCARTHY E-MAILS 9/2-7/05
1E. TEGUCIGALPA 826 (ALL NOTAL)

11. (SBU) Charge, Acting DCM, Consul General, and PolChief met September 26 with Minister of the Presidency Ramon Medina Luna, Minister of Government and Justice Jose Pacheco, Acting Foreign Minister Juan Alberto Lara Bueso, and Commissioner for Honduras Overseas AMB Rene Becerra to deliver ref A demarche on changes in deportation and immigration. (Post's DHS/ICE Attaché was in the U.S. for an official trip and unable to attend the meeting.) Charge delivered the talking points, emphasizing the need for a switch from "catch and release" to "catch and deport." EmbOffs highlighted the current backlog of 1,300 Hondurans awaiting deportation and the estimated 200 Hondurans per day apprehended at the border.

12. (SBU) The GOH response was positive, helped by the fact that AMB Becerra was very familiar with the issue. Becerra highlighted the digital video conferencing (DVC) that the GOH is pioneering to interview potential deportees, and Charge thanked the GOH for that initiative.

13. (SBU) GOH officials noted concern about possible deportations of Hondurans in the New Orleans area, and reiterated their September 19 request to DHS for a statement by DHS clarifying that the USG was not conducting a roundup of illegal aliens in areas affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The Charge agreed to issue an Embassy statement along those lines as soon as possible. (Note: The Embassy is working with WHA/CEN and the DHS Office of International Affairs to coordinate such a statement. End Note.)

14. (SBU) Medina Luna asked specifically what the USG needed from the GOH. EmbOffs reiterated that the USG needed the GOH to:

- grant DHS permission for the Justice Prisoner and Alien Transportation System (JPATS) deportation flights to land at San Pedro Sula in addition to Tegucigalpa and permission to land any day of the week, not only weekdays; and
- continue cooperating with DHS on expedited issuance of travel documents for deportees.

EmbOffs noted that DHS could always increase deportations by commercial flights but preferred to do most by JPATS flights for various reasons. GOH officials agreed that JPATS flights were preferable to larger numbers of deportees arriving by commercial air.

15. (SBU) Medina Luna agreed to both requests, and asked MinGov Pacheco to be point person on the issue of permission for JPATS flights landing at San Pedro Sula and on weekdays, noting that Pacheco would need to research the issue quickly before granting this permission. Pacheco said he would get back to the Embassy in a week or so. Medina Luna asked AMB Becerra, in coordination with the Foreign Ministry, Honduran Ambassador to the U.S. Norman Garcia, and Honduran consulates in the U.S., to continue working closely with the USG, especially DHS, on DVCs for deportees and expedited issuance of travel documents.

16. (SBU) MinGov Pacheco noted that an extremely tight Immigration budget could limit GOH assistance to deportation flights. Specifically, Pacheco noted that the two Centers for Returned Migrants had exhausted their budgets. DHS financial support, not only for bus fare from San Pedro Sula to Tegucigalpa, but also if possible for other aspects of the Centers' work, especially given potential expansion to San Pedro Sula, would be of critical assistance.

17. (U) Comment: Honduran Immigration has repeatedly requested and Post has sought State/Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) funding for Centers for Returned Migrants (run by Catholic nuns) in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula. PRM previously allowed the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to fund these centers, using

reprogrammed PRM money which has now run out. The money never went through Honduran Immigration, but rather from PRM to IOM to the NGO. The centers put a humane face on repatriations, help deportees return to their homes of origin (instead of just leaving them in Tegucigalpa), provide job counseling, and help the GOH manage the flow of deportees, which aides in addressing the gang issue. Post requests that DHS provide funding to these centers, in addition to bus fare from San Pedro Sula to Tegucigalpa, to help facilitate the expansion of JPATS flights to San Pedro Sula.

18. (U) Comment continued: Post also reiterates the request in ref E for DHS to reinstate funding for the DHS/ICE Program for the Return of Third Country National (TCN) Migrants Intercepted in the Latin America & Caribbean Region (Project 057). As the USG pushes for increased cooperation from Central American countries, Post believes now is the time for DHS to resume funding for a cost-effective program that will help reduce the number of illegal TCN migrants trying to reach the U.S. from Central America. End Comment.

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